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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9840
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 1626
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UNCLAS PARAMARIBO 000622

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR WHA/CAR for Jackie Rosholt, EEB/TRA for Viki Limaye-Davis,
DOT for Brian Hedberg, DHS/TSA for Loretta McNeir

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [KTIA](#) [XL](#) [NS](#)

SUBJECT: BUREACRATIC BLOCKS ON OPEN SKIES, DIRECT FLIGHTS TO
SURINAME

REF: (A) SECSTATE 146737 (B) PARAMARIBO 558

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: After delaying for months in response to Embassy attempts to set up a meeting to further discuss air traffic with the United States, government of Suriname (GOS) Minister of Transportation, Communication, and Tourism (TCT) Richel Apinsa tabled Open Skies, saying the GOS prefers to wait for a CARICOM approach. Apinsa also said that Suriname Airways (SLM) is interested in obtaining approval to fly to Miami, and would like to begin the formal process in 2008. In light of difficulty passing a National Aviation Security Proposal, Post doubts SLM or the GOS will be ready in 2008. END SUMMARY

Shadowboxing the Ministry and the Airline

12. (SBU) During a courtesy call to new transportation Minister Richel Apinsa in June, Post and the Minister agreed to look into the status of SLM's stated desire to fly directly to the United States. Previous to that meeting, SLM complained to the media that the U.S. was hampering its "U.S. dream" with excessive security requirements. Five months were to pass before Apinsa agreed to a follow-up meeting to discuss SLM's claims. On November 26, Apinsa acknowledged that there is no "block" or "hold" on SLM applying to fly to the United States and that an official security inspection would only occur should SLM apply. She said she appreciated the clarity of Post's explanation, and that SLM wishes to apply in 12008.

Little Movement on Years-Old Aviation Security Proposal

13. (SBU) The major sticking point for an SLM application is questionable airport security, of which the GOS is well aware. The civil aviation authority in Suriname says it cannot move forward with improvements until the National Civil Aviation Security Proposal (NCASP) is passed, but this law has languished in bureaucratic limbo since 2005. Asked for an update, Deputy Permanent Secretary on Transport Marcia Clumper said the law awaits approval by the Council of Ministers, but that first the Council will need to be re-briefed on the issue, as some Ministers have changed since the previous submission in January of 2007, when the NCASP was last presented -- and the Council was unconvinced. Furthermore, Clumper said this process will have to involve all who have worked on the law, including Customs, the Ministries of Defense, Health, and TCT, and the carriers. Clumper and Apinsa promised to see what they can do to move the process forward.

Open Skies Still Closed

¶4. (SBU) In October post delivered demarche ref A, regarding opening bilateral discussion of Open Skies. Post spoke directly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as required by MFA protocol, delivering a copy of the demarche for TCT (ref B). MFA Head of the Americas division Terence Craig had previously expressed optimism about Open Skies, saying that as other countries are negotiating bilaterally, Suriname should as well; he also expressed mild disapproval of previous TCT Minister Alice Amafo, who ended bilateral Open Skies discussion in 2005 by referring the matter to CARICOM. However, when Post met with Apinsa on November 26, she had not received the Open Skies information from MFA. She and Clumper accepted copies of and agreed to review them, but rejected suggestions to consider bilateral negotiations, saying they want to see what CARICOM will do with open skies. Clumper said she does not have the feeling that CARICOM has struck Open Skies from its agenda, but rather that "certain actors" want to further inform themselves.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: While Post is pleased to have TCT's pledge to move forward on NCASP and thus on a possible direct flight route to the United States, there are many steps involved, and if SLM must wait for NCASP approval, its goal of applying for a route in 2008 is unrealistic. Bureaucratic processes in Suriname move slowly, especially as the number of Ministries involved increases. Furthermore, the talk of a route to the United States may be mostly a marketing ploy, with no direct route envisioned: the route would likely go via Aruba or another resort island, thereby expanding SLM's sales without making it any easier to get to Suriname from Miami (the best flights currently go via Port of Spain). As for Open Skies, TCT appears to have checked the "too hard" box, delegating Open Skies back to CARICOM responsibility. END COMMENT

GENTON